

Algae may put you in hot water

BY ERIC McGUINNESS

Hamilton Harbour's health-care team is worried — and saddened — by a burst of toxic blue-green algae that may keep people and animals away from the water for weeks.

Blue-green algae consist of microscopic organisms more akin to bacteria than algae.

Some species produce toxins that can irritate the skin of people and pets and be harmful if consumed or inhaled.

Marilyn Baxter, executive director of the Bay Area Restoration Council, said yesterday: "I'm very disappointed for all of us that we — everyone in Hamilton — can't enjoy the water more. It shows more

work needs to be done."

While harbour water quality has improved greatly in recent years, Hamilton's big Woodward Avenue sewage treatment plant continues to release too much phosphorus, a plant nutrient that encourages growth of blue-green algae that can irritate the skin.

Baxter said, "More has to be

done on the wastewater treatment plants. Then the algae problem should disappear."

John Hall, co-ordinator of the harbour Remedial Action Plan, spotted a paint-like scum of blue-green algae at LaSalle Park in Burlington and more around the marina at Pier 8 on the 24th.

He reported it to public health officials who collected samples,

had them tested and issued an alert last Friday warning people to avoid swimming or wading along the western shoreline — especially at LaSalle, Pier 4 and Bayfront parks; at the Desjardins Canal fishing area and at Princess Point.

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